



Administrative Committee on Coordination

17 June 1999

English and French

Summary of conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its first regular session of 1999

WMO headquarters, Geneva, 9 and 10 April 1999

Summary: ACC conclusions requiring specific follow-up

The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment — Interactions with the private sector

ACC noted that at the World Economic Forum at Davos, held in January 1999, the Secretary-General had launched an initiative to harness the power and reach of corporations to one of the core functions of the United Nations — advocacy of universal values. ACC members expressed their readiness to contribute to its further development, particularly in the broader context of the agreed development-oriented goals of United Nations conferences (paras. 8 and 12).

ACC agreed that in pursuing a “compact” or understanding with the private sector, the development dimension of the partnership should be stressed, and other partners, such as different levels of government, including municipal authorities and parliamentarians, as well as trade unions and NGOs, should be actively engaged. The development dimension should draw from, *inter alia*, the programmes of action agreed by the international community at the series of global conferences of the 1990s (para. 19).

ACC called on its subsidiary machinery to keep under review experiences and practices of ACC member organizations, with a view to ensuring systematic exchange of information, improving understanding of each other’s policies and activities, promoting the use of common terminology, and facilitating transparency and consistency in developing cooperation with the private sector (para. 20).

Follow-up to recent ACC conclusions

The Millennium Assembly

In ACC, the view was expressed that the Millennium Assembly was a unique opportunity for the United Nations system to take stock of its past and set a path for the future; the themes of the Assembly should be such as to help set a vision for the United Nations for the coming decades, and it was important that the executive heads extend all the necessary support to the Secretary-General in his effort to ensure that the outcome of the Assembly is both concrete and significant. It was agreed that the dialogue to be initiated at the ACC retreat on the main challenges facing the United Nations system in the next decade and the system's responses would be pursued in the months ahead. ACC members were invited to transmit to the Secretary-General their views and suggestions in this regard (para. 24).

The causes of conflict and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa

The follow-up given within the system to the Secretary-General's report was further discussed at the ACC retreat. A wide array of relevant activities was reported and the Organizational Committee was requested to ensure that there is an active exchange of information within the system on the matter. It was agreed that reporting, in the context of the implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa, should capture all relevant information from individual organizations of the United Nations system regarding actions under way in Africa, and that this information could then be used for any other reporting requirements (para. 27).

Recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements to establish an environmental management group

ACC agreed that further consultations to be conducted by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme with ACC members regarding the proposed environment management group's terms of reference, criteria for membership and methods of work, should take fully into account the above views of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (para. 29).

World summit on the information society

It was agreed that ACC members would contact the International Telecommunication Union by correspondence directly or through their Organizational Committee representative to confirm their interest in cooperating with the International Telecommunication Union in the organization of the summit and to indicate the contribution they intended to make in this regard. The matter would then be reviewed at the fall session of the Organizational Committee (para. 32).

Future arrangements for natural disaster reduction

The importance of an inter-agency approach to the follow-up to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was generally emphasized. ACC noted that the United Nations would prepare a proposal which would be the subject of consultations with agencies most directly concerned prior to its submission to the General Assembly through the Council (para. 35).

Consultative Committee on Programme and Operations Questions

ACC, on the recommendation of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operations Questions, adopted an advocacy statement on the implementation of resolution 53/192 (para. 36) (see annex II).

ACC also noted that the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operations Questions had adopted, on its behalf, guidance notes on (a) the implementation of the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes; (b) regional and subregional development cooperation; and (c) the partnership approach — principles underpinning the United Nations system's operational collaboration with civil society organizations (para. 37).

Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

ACC recalled its request to the International Civil Service Commission at its second regular session of 1998 to identify in its reports best practices of those organizations that were most successful in increasing the representation of women in its staff as well as its statement on gender equality and mainstreaming adopted at its first regular session of 1998, and its intention to adopt another statement as an input into the special session of the General Assembly to be held in the year 2000 on the theme "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century", on the basis of a draft to be submitted to it by the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality at its second regular session in fall 1999. In the light of the commitment of the executive heads to give their strong and visible support to the advancement and empowerment of women and gender equality, ACC agreed to hold a substantive discussion on progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming at its second regular session in fall 1999, based on the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality draft statement (para. 38).

ACC also supported the conduct of a survey of management commitment to gender mainstreaming. This survey will be conducted by the United Nations Population Fund on behalf of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality through a questionnaire addressed to senior and mid-level managers in all organizations. ACC invited senior managers to present and discuss the results of the survey in a panel, to be organized by the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality on the occasion of the special session (para. 39).

ACC statement on small island developing States

The Secretary-General of WMO recalled the ACC statement on natural disasters issued at its spring session of 1998, and highlighted the vulnerability of the fragile economies of small island developing States to such disasters. ACC noted that a further statement focusing on

the impact of natural disasters was currently being reviewed and would be adopted on its behalf by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (para. 40) (see annex III).

Year 2000 issue

In the light of a draft statement proposed by the high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions, ACC adopted a note on the year 2000 issue (para. 41).

United Nations staff security and safety

At the request of ACC, the Meeting of the Legal Advisers of the United Nations system had considered the safety and security of United Nations staff and the legal protection afforded to them by their privileges and immunities. The Legal Advisers concluded that the legal protection applicable to international civil servants were generally adequate. They noted, however, that in order to assess the need for additional legal protective measures, they needed factual information concerning incidents involving the safety and security of the staff of the United Nations system. ACC agreed that all organizations of the United Nations system systematically report such incidents to the United Nations Security Coordinator who in turn would maintain a comprehensive record for the benefit of the entire United Nations system. This record would be examined also from a legal perspective in order to identify the need for enhanced legal protection (para. 42).

International Civil Service Commission

The Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions), in reviewing International Civil Service Commission budget proposals for the biennium(2000–2001), noted that they considerably exceeded the level for the current biennium. It further noted that, in its resolution 52/12 B, the General Assembly had requested the competent intergovernmental bodies to consider the modalities for a review of the International Civil Service Commission, including its mandate, membership and functioning in order to increase its effectiveness in meeting the challenges facing the United Nations system. ACC, at its second regular session in 1998, had endorsed proposed terms of reference for a review group to undertake this review. In the circumstances, it appeared premature for the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) to recommend approval of the ICSC budget to ACC. Meanwhile, ACC concurred with the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) recommendation that reductions be made in the proposed International Civil Service Commission budget for the biennium(2000–2001) so that there is no nominal increase compared to the budget appropriated for the 1998–1999 biennium and that this be reflected accordingly in the Secretary-General's budget proposals to the General Assembly (para. 43).

ACC endorsed the amendment to the statute of the Commission proposed by the Legal Advisers, and requested that the Commission place this amendment before the General Assembly for its consideration (para. 46).

Introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system

The United Nations Legal Counsel provided a report to the Secretary-General regarding the “introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system” which ACC had requested ad hoc Meeting of Legal Advisers to pursue. The Legal Advisers decided, because of the complexity of the issue, to establish a drafting group to elaborate a final paper on the advisability of introducing such a mechanism. ACC requested the Meeting of Legal Advisers to submit a final report for its consideration and approval at its fall 1999 session (para. 47).

Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

The Director-General of the World Health Organization highlighted the issue of United Nations staff and dependants living with HIV/AIDS, especially in country offices, where there was considerable inequity in available care. She indicated that stepped up efforts would be undertaken by the UNAIDS secretariat and the World Health Organization to continue the analysis of the issues involved, together with other concerned agencies. She proposed that the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel Questions) consider putting the issue on its agenda and reporting to ACC on any policy-level considerations and joint actions needed (para. 53).

On the recommendation of the Secretary-General, ACC concurred with the above suggestion (para. 54).

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its first regular session of 1999 at the headquarters of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) at Geneva on 9 and 10 April 1999, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In opening the session, the Secretary-General welcomed to ACC Yoshio Utsumi, the new Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, and Juan Somavía, the new Director-General of the International Labour Organization, who were attending ACC for the first time. The agenda for the session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment: interactions with the private sector.
3. Follow-up to recent ACC conclusions.
4. Other matters:
 - (a) Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS;
 - (b) Dates for the fall session of ACC.

2. A private meeting of ACC members was held in the morning of 9 April 1999, at which the executive heads reviewed recent developments in the political, socio-economic, health and financial areas. The Secretary-General referred to a statement on Kosovo he had issued before the meeting. It was decided that ACC would also adopt a statement on the subject. A statement was then drawn up and adopted during the formal session (see annex I).

3. At the private meeting, the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization expanded on his proposal for the transformation of ACC, as outlined in his letter to executive heads dated 8 March 1999. Following an exchange of views, the Secretary-General indicated that he would arrange, in that light and in close consultation with ACC members, for the preparation of some action proposals that would provide the basis for further consideration of the matter by ACC at its fall 1999 session.

4. The present report covers the outcome of the discussions at the regular session of the Committee.

I. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment: interactions with the private sector

5. In his introductory statement, the Secretary-General recalled that this agenda item had been conceived as the beginning of a broad process of reflection — a process that he hoped ACC would pursue throughout the year — on the new demands placed on public policy by the global environment that was emerging at the eve of the millennium. The system's interactions with the private sector should be addressed by ACC in this perspective. The process would be valuable to him in formulating his report to the Millennium Assembly, and should also prove useful to all executive heads in charting the way ahead for their organizations in the context of the system as a whole.

6. The Committee addressed interactions with the private sector, primarily in the context of the system's normative functions, although operational implications were also discussed. Discussions focused on ways for the United Nations system to further develop such partnerships and expand and reinforce the platform for dialogue and mutual trust with the private sector. Without the private sector developing and marketing new technology and investing in developing countries, some of the goals of the United Nations would be unattainable. At the same time, as the Secretary-General had strongly pointed out in his dialogue with the corporate sector, the United Nations system also had much to offer the business community. Peace and human security, which are the main objectives of the United Nations system, are also essential preconditions for business to prosper. Beyond that, the normative and regulatory work of the United Nations system is what make a stable and open global market possible.

7. The system's capacity to have an impact on the process of globalization is increasingly linked to its ability to involve the private sector, civil society as well as Governments. Practically all organizations have modalities for outreach to NGOs, and the dialogue with them can be greatly facilitated by the fact that some of these organizations share many objectives of the United Nations family, even though their governance and methods of work may be different. Interactions with the private sector are at different stages of development both within individual organizations and across the system, and can be furthered by developing partnerships which engage the private sector in support of United Nations system objectives.

8. **ACC noted that at the World Economic Forum held at Davos in January 1999, the Secretary-General had launched an initiative to harness the power and reach of corporations to one of the core functions of the United Nations — advocacy of universal values.** The initiative was designed to engage the world business community as partners in promoting universal norms, in particular in the areas of human rights, labour standards and environmental practices. In the same context, the Secretary-General had called on the private sector, in measuring its success, to see beyond financial returns and take into consideration the social impact of its activities — to choose between a global market driven only by calculations of short-term profit and one which has a human face.

9. With regard to the selection of the areas on which the Secretary-General's initiative was focused, ACC noted that three considerations had guided it: they are all areas which are directly relevant to the conduct of firms; they all have a strong legal foundation reflected in international agreements, and as such are geared to engaging the private sector in furthering the political consensus among nations and advancing the implementation of universally accepted standards; and they are areas that, if pursued, as is being increasingly advocated in some quarters, through restrictions on international trade and investment rather than through deliberate action of public policy and in the corporate sphere, can lead to new forms of protectionism threatening the open global economy.

10. In turn, the Secretary-General, on behalf of the United Nations system, had offered the active cooperation of the relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, and had especially highlighted what the system does in the political arena to help make the case for and maintain an environment that favours trade and open market.

11. It was acknowledged that holding a meaningful dialogue with private business and involving private firms in the work of the United Nations system was a challenging task that required, to be successfully pursued, sustained attention as well as sensitivity to different cultures and possible conflicting interests. It was important that the system pursue complementary approaches. A common understanding of the objectives of and opportunities opened by the Secretary-General's initiative will be required. It was noted in this connection that the three institutions most directly responsible for the areas identified in the Secretary-General's initiative, namely, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, had made a good beginning, at a joint meeting held the day before the ACC session, in operationalizing the concepts underlying the initiative. The Secretary-General looked forward to working

with all ACC members in furthering the initiative in the months ahead.

12. Note was taken of the considerations that had led the Secretary-General to initiating the proposal of a "compact" with the private sector in the areas of human rights, labour standards and environmental practices. **ACC members expressed their readiness to contribute to its further development, particularly in the broader context of the agreed development-oriented goals of United Nations conferences.**

13. Central to the debate was an understanding that internationally agreed norms and standards should not be used as conditionality in the policy dialogue or development implementation. It was recognized, at the same time, that there are requirements and follow-up actions to be taken to ensure that internationally agreed norms and standards become instruments of public policy and reference points for private sector strategies.

14. It was recalled that the United Nations system's work in setting international norms and standards covers a very wide range of issues and constituencies. Greater consistency among such norms and standards should be a common goal. A common effort was also required to make advances towards the application of internationally agreed norms and standards more visible in order to counteract cynicism and highlight the relevance of this key function of the system.

15. Many executive heads shared with the Committee their organizations' experiences in interacting with the private sector. In stressing the need to emphasize the development dimension of any "compact" or understanding with the private sector, ACC members recalled that the position of developing countries and a considerable body of research coincided in pointing out that the application of standards in both the social and environmental areas cannot be sustained in the absence of conditions and prospects for development. In addition, it was noted that core labour standards are an integral part of a compact or understanding with the private sector, and that the application of such standards would promote and enhance social dialogue, which is required for ensuring effective participation of business in development.

16. During the discussion, it was also stressed that a compact or understanding with the private sector should not be seen to apply only to multinational corporations; it should also embrace small and medium enterprises. However, more analysis is needed of the different implications that these approaches would have for large multinationals on the one hand, and small and medium-sized enterprises on the other.

17. It was recalled that degradation or loss of natural capital can undermine over time the economic and social viability of

a given area. It was therefore in the long-term self-interest of the private sector to adopt a more integrated approach to financial, social and natural capital. In the past, national authorities had sought to use legal regulatory instruments to ensure compliance with environmental norms by the business community. Economic instruments were now increasingly being used. In this regard, an important responsibility of the United Nations system was to demonstrate that private investment without environmental safeguards and social norms will have detrimental consequences for the economic and social sectors over time.

18. United Nations system cooperation with the private sector should be proactive but approached with both balance and realism. This especially applied to the development of partnerships at the country/operational level. Operational cooperation raised a host of especially difficult issues concerning choices of suitable forms and modalities of engagement. Information-sharing within the United Nations system in this regard will contribute to maximizing impact while avoiding possible conflict of interest.

19. ACC agreed that in pursuing a compact or understanding with the private sector, the development dimension of the partnership should be stressed, and other partners, such as different levels of government, including municipal authorities and parliamentarians, as well as trade unions and NGOs, should be actively engaged. The development dimension should draw from, *inter alia*, the programmes of action agreed by the international community at the series of global conferences held in the 1990s.

20. ACC called on its subsidiary machinery to keep under review experiences and practices of ACC member organizations with a view to ensuring systematic exchange of information, improving understanding of each other's policies and activities, promoting the use of common terminology, and facilitating transparency and consistency in developing cooperation with the private sector.

II. Follow-up to recent ACC conclusions

A. Millennium Assembly

21. ACC was informed about ongoing consultations within the United Nations at the intergovernmental level to develop theme(s) and sub-theme(s) for the Millennium Assembly, and about the preparatory process for the Assembly as well as the Millennium Summit and the Millennium Forum.

22. In order to involve civil society at large in the preparatory processes, regional hearings were being planned in close cooperation with and possibly in conjunction with meetings of the regional economic commissions between June and September 1999. The participants at the regional hearings would include, *inter alia*, NGOs, individuals in the academic and political spheres and other civil society actors.

23. ACC was also informed that during the discussion of this item in the Organizational Committee (OC), it had been proposed that there should be timely exchange of information on the various activities and special events being planned by the organizations and agencies of the system for the year 2000, covering both organizational arrangements and intended outcomes, so as to encourage inter-agency collaboration and mutually reinforcing results. In general, OC members had expressed the hope that the opportunity would be seized for a serious reflection and action-oriented conclusions on how the system can position itself to address effectively the challenges facing it in the new millennium.

24. In ACC, the view was expressed that the Millennium Assembly was a unique opportunity for the United Nations system to take stock of its past and set a path for the future; the themes of the Assembly should be such as to help set a vision for the United Nations for the coming decades and it was important that the executive heads extend all the necessary support to the Secretary-General in his effort to ensure that the outcome of the Assembly is both concrete and significant. **It was agreed that the dialogue to be initiated at the ACC retreat on the main challenges facing the United Nations system in the next decade and the system's responses would be pursued in the months ahead. ACC members were invited to transmit to the Secretary-General their views and suggestions in this regard.**

B. Peace-building: strategic framework process

25. ACC was informed of developments in this area since its fall 1998 session. Generic guidelines were being finalized by the Deputy Secretary-General, following the receipt of comments and suggestions from ACC members. In addition, the Deputy Secretary-General, in a letter dated 14 December 1998 to ACC members, has proposed that the strategic framework be applied next to Sierra Leone. With regard specifically to Sierra Leone, at the private meeting of ACC the Secretary-General referred to the major humanitarian relief effort under way in that country and the involvement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Sierra Leone in support of the peace efforts of the Economic Community of

West African States. It was confirmed that the design of a strategic framework for Sierra Leone would be undertaken in consultation with ACC members, drawing on, and learning from, the experience gained in connection with the strategic framework for Afghanistan.

C. Causes of conflict and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa

26. ACC was informed that most of the agencies had brought the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) to the attention of their governing bodies. Others were in the process of doing so. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) had also taken up the report. Further inter-agency discussions on its follow-up will be targeted at enhancing linkages and complementarity with substantive initiatives being undertaken within the United Nations system on Africa. In addition, ACC was informed of progress achieved by the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and of plans ahead to contribute, through the Initiative, to enhanced inter-agency coordination in support of regional cooperation and development, including the further implementation of relevant recommendations in the Secretary-General's report.

27. The follow-up given within the system to the Secretary-General's report was further discussed at the ACC retreat. A wide array of relevant activities was reported, and OC was requested to ensure that there is an active exchange of information within the system on the matter. It was agreed that reporting, in the context of the implementation of the Special Initiative, should capture all relevant information from individual organizations of the United Nations system regarding actions under way in Africa and that this information could then be used for any other reporting requirements.

D. Recommendation of the task force on environment and human settlements to establish an environmental management group

28. ACC noted the following IACSD recommendations regarding the establishment of an environmental management group:

(a) It is essential to ensure that the proposed group does not duplicate the work of IACSD and its task managers, and other existing arrangements for inter-agency coordination, including relevant ACC subsidiary bodies. The group should be seen not as a new standing body for inter-agency coordination but rather as a function that would facilitate the Executive Director of UNEP to carry out his functions related to promotion of coordinated approaches to environmental/human settlements issues in the United Nations system and to bring environmental perspective, in particular its normative and analytical aspects, into the work of other organizations, including IACSD and its task managers;

(b) The group should, *inter alia*, facilitate UNEP in carrying out its responsibilities as the IACSD task manager for a number of environment-related chapters of Agenda 21 with a view to enhancing UNEP's contribution to the work of IACSD and the Commission on Sustainable Development, as appropriate. The group can be also used as a mechanism that would allow UNEP to effectively bring the environmental perspective into the work of other IACSD task managers. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests, which assists the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the task manager for chapter 11 of Agenda 21, coordinates support to the Commission's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and fosters collaboration between international organizations in the area of forests, could serve as a useful example;

(c) The group could function as a coherent process of consultations on specific environment/human settlements issues, to be identified by the Executive Director of UNEP in consultation with executive heads of United Nations organizations. Such consultations would involve those organizations from within and outside the United Nations system that are specifically relevant to the problem to be addressed and can make a concrete contribution to its solution. The Ecosystems Conservation Group, which brings together United Nations agencies, secretariats of biodiversity-related conventions and non-United Nations international institutions to address important and emerging biodiversity issues, could serve as an example for the group an issue management approach. In addition, the recent initiative of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to involve relevant United Nations organizations in a consultative process that allows them to better respond to the follow-up of the Kyoto mechanisms may also serve as a useful example;

(d) The work of the group should be demand-driven and based on the need to resolve specific issues in a given time-frame. Such issues could be, as a rule, determined through a consultative process, involving, as appropriate, IACSD and

other inter-agency bodies, unless such issues are of an urgent nature. Specific tasks to be addressed by the group should be time-bound, and the results of its deliberations, when appropriate, should be brought to the attention of the Secretary-General as well as relevant inter-agency and/or intergovernmental bodies. Furthermore, recommendations of the group that have a bearing on the United Nations system's work in sustainable development should be submitted to ACC through IACSD.

29. ACC agreed that further consultations, to be conducted by the Executive Director of UNEP with ACC members regarding the terms of reference, criteria for membership and methods of work of the proposed group, should take fully into account the above views of IACSD.

30. In this connection, particular reference was made in ACC to the recommendations of IACSD that the group should not duplicate existing mechanisms, particularly IACSD, that it should not be a standing body but be demand-driven, and that its work should be brought to the attention of ACC through IACSD. The Executive Director of UNEP fully concurred with this approach.

E. World summit on the information society

31. ACC was informed of the outcome of relevant discussions in the Organizational Committee. During the consideration of this question in ACC, the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) informed the Committee that he was expected to report to the ITU governing body on the outcome of his consultations with ACC members regarding the organization of a world summit on the information society. He recalled a letter he had sent to executive heads on the matter, and expressed the hope that the summit would provide a unique opportunity to bring together the United Nations family of organizations and other actors around an issue that is now central to development and involves important political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), recalling his organization's mandate in the field of communication and information, informed ACC of discussions under way in his organization on a related and complementary proposal, concerning the convening of a world conference on communication and information. He welcomed the offer for cooperation by ITU, and confirmed that he would submit the proposal to UNESCO's governing body at its forthcoming meeting in May/June 1999. The Executive Director of UNEP also expressed his organization's interest in cooperating with ITU in the organization of the summit.

32. It was agreed that ACC members would contact ITU by correspondence directly or through their OC representative to confirm their interest in cooperating with ITU in the organization of the summit, and to indicate the contribution they intended to make in this regard. The matter would then be reviewed at the fall session of OC/ACC.

F. Future arrangements for natural disaster reduction

33. ACC was informed that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with ACC, to submit recommendations to it, through the Council, at its substantive session of 1999, on how the United Nations system would deal with natural disaster reduction after the conclusion of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) in 1999, taking into account lessons learned and making early warning a key element for future natural disaster reduction strategy (see A/53/185). ACC was informed that during discussions in OC, different options for the institutional coordination arrangements had been examined and the need to avoid proliferation of secretariat coordination structures and mechanisms was underlined.

34. In ACC, it was pointed out that IDNDR had made substantial progress, particularly in promoting more effective early warning systems, contributing to reducing loss of life and property. There was, therefore, a need to put in place arrangements that would build upon these achievements as the Decade came to a close.

35. The importance of an inter-agency approach to the follow-up to IDNDR was generally emphasized. ACC noted that the United Nations would prepare a proposal which would be the subject of consultations with agencies most directly concerned prior to its submission to the General Assembly through the Council.

G. Consultative Committee on Programme and Operations Questions

36. Given the importance of demonstrating strong support and consistent messages by all executive heads on the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 53/192 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, **ACC, on the recommendation of CCPOQ, adopted an advocacy statement on the implementation of resolution 53/192 (see annex II).**

37. ACC also noted that CCPOQ had adopted, on its behalf, guidance notes on (a) the implementation of the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes; (b) regional and subregional development cooperation; and (c) the partnership approach: principles underpinning the United Nations system's operational collaboration with civil society organizations.

H. Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

38. ACC recalled its request to the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) at its second regular session of 1998 to identify in its reports best practices of those organizations that were most successful in increasing the representation of women in its staff as well as its statement on gender equality and mainstreaming adopted at its first regular session of 1998 and its intention to adopt another statement as an input into the special session of the General Assembly to be held in the year 2000 on the theme "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century", on the basis of a draft to be submitted to it by the Inter-Agency Committee on Gender and Equality (IACWGE) at its second regular session in fall 1999. **In the light of the commitment of executive heads to give their strong and visible support to the advancement and empowerment of women and gender equality, ACC agreed to hold a substantive discussion on progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming at its second regular session in fall 1999, based on the IACWGE draft statement.**

39. ACC also supported the conduct of a survey of management commitment to gender mainstreaming. This survey will be conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on behalf of IACWGE through a questionnaire addressed to senior and mid-level managers in all organizations. **ACC invited senior managers to present and discuss the results of the survey in a panel, to be organized by IACWGE on the occasion of the special session.**

I. ACC statement on small island developing States

40. The Secretary-General of WMO recalled the ACC statement on natural disasters issued at its spring session of 1998, and highlighted the vulnerability of the fragile economies of small island developing States to such disasters. **ACC noted that a further statement focusing on the impact of natural**

disasters on small island developing States was currently being reviewed in, and would be adopted on its behalf by IACSD. The ACC statement, as adopted through IACSD, is contained in annex III.

J. CCAQ high-level meeting

41. ACC was informed that the year 2000 (Y2K) issue had been the main focus of the most recent Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) high-level meeting. Several recommendations on the Y2K issue requiring the attention of ACC and the United Nations system had been made in the high-level meeting (see ACC/1999/21). **In the light of a draft statement proposed by the high-level meeting of CCAQ, ACC adopted the following note:**

ACC note on Y2K issue

1. The executive heads are concerned that on or before 1 January 2000, some computer-based systems across the world may be unable to process information correctly causing unpredictable results and inevitably some dislocation of services.
2. They are aware that the difficulties created by such dislocation will extend beyond the information technology area and are of concern to the senior management of each organization.
3. Through CCAQ, the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator and the Information Systems Coordinating Committee (ISCC), a number of steps are being taken to prepare to help organizations identify and meet potential problems that may occur, *inter alia*, with financial services, utilities, telecommunications, transportation and other essential services. A system-wide coordinated approach, location by location, is being taken to deal with contingency planning and logistics as well as financial and personnel matters. This is particularly important at the field level, where United Nations resident coordinators have been asked to take the lead in preparing teams to deal with potential problems.
4. Senior managers across the system will utilize information posted on existing ISCC and Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)) Web sites to ensure that efforts are coordinated at the maximum extent possible.
5. At this stage, it remains difficult to assess just when and where Y2K problems may arise and the extent

and duration of their impact. It is important neither to overexaggerate nor underestimate the extent of these problems. United Nations system organizations are working diligently to ensure that, within this context, they are prepared to meet potential problems arising out of possible worldwide computer system malfunctions.

K. United Nations staff security and safety

42. At the request of ACC, the Meeting of the Legal Advisers of the United Nations system had considered the safety and security of United Nations staff and the legal protection afforded to them by their privileges and immunities. The Legal Advisers concluded that the legal protection applicable to international civil servants were generally adequate. They noted, however, that in order to assess the need for additional legal protective measures, they needed factual information concerning incidents involving the safety and security of the staff of the United Nations system. **ACC agreed that all organizations of the United Nations system should systematically report such incidents to the United Nations Security Coordinator, who in turn would maintain a comprehensive record for the benefit of the entire United Nations system. This record would be examined also from a legal perspective in order to identify the need for enhanced legal protection.**

L. International Civil Service Commission

43. CCAQ(FB), in reviewing ICSC budget proposals for the biennium 2000–2001, noted that they considerably exceeded the level for the current biennium. It further noted that in its resolution 52/12 B, the General Assembly had requested the competent intergovernmental bodies to consider the modalities for a review of ICSC, including its mandate, membership and functioning, in order to increase its effectiveness in meeting the challenges facing the United Nations system. ACC, at its second regular session of 1998, had endorsed proposed terms of reference for a review group to undertake this review. In the circumstances, it appeared premature for CCAQ(FB) to recommend approval of the ICSC budget to ACC. **Meanwhile, ACC concurred with CCAQ(FB)'s recommendation that reductions be made in the proposed ICSC budget for the biennium 2000–2001 so that there is no nominal increase compared to the budget appropriated for the 1998–1999 biennium, and that this be reflected accordingly in the Secretary-General's budget proposals to the General Assembly.**

44. At its second regular session of 1998, ACC had before it a note prepared by the Legal Advisers of the United Nations system, proposing an amendment of the statute of ICSC to allow it and participating organizations to request advisory opinion from an ad hoc panel, composed of the Presidents of the United Nations and ILO Tribunals and a third person chosen by them. ACC requested that the views of the two Presidents be obtained on an urgent basis and conveyed to ACC members. The Legal Advisers consulted the Presidents of the United Nations and ILO Administrative Tribunals on the proposals. In the light of their replies, the Legal Advisers further considered the matter and decided to amend their preferred option to accommodate the main concern expressed by the Presidents, and to provide that the panel shall be composed of judges of the respective Tribunals designated by the Presidents rather than the Presidents themselves.

45. The proposed amendment of the ICSC statute reads as follows:

“Draft amendment to the statute of ICSC

Article 18 bis

1. The Commission may request an advisory opinion regarding the legality of any decision or recommendation taken or to be taken under the present statute from an Ad Hoc Advisory Panel.
2. The Executive Head of any of the organizations may request an advisory opinion from the Ad Hoc Advisory Panel regarding the legality of any measure based in whole or in part on a decision or recommendation referred to in paragraph 1 which is being considered for adoption or implementation in the organization concerned.
3. An Ad Hoc Advisory Panel shall be established upon the request for an advisory opinion by the Commission or the Executive Head of any of the organizations, and shall be composed of a judge of the Administrative Tribunal of the United Nations and a judge of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization, to be designated by the President of the respective Administrative Tribunal, and a third person to be appointed by agreement between the two Presidents, who shall act as Chairman of the Panel.
4. The Ad Hoc Advisory Panel shall establish its own procedures, which shall make provision for the presentation in any proceedings before the Panel of other organizations that so request and of staff representatives on behalf of staff whose rights may be

affected by the implementation of the decision or recommendation.

5. Expenses of the Ad Hoc Advisory Panel shall be borne by the Commission in the case of a request referred to in paragraph 1, or in the case of a request under paragraph 2, by the requesting organization or organizations.”

46. ACC endorsed the amendment to the statute of ICSC proposed by the Legal Advisers, and requested that ICSC place this amendment before the General Assembly for its consideration.

M. Introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system

47. The United Nations Legal Counsel provided a report to the Secretary-General regarding the introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system, which ACC had requested the ad hoc Meeting of Legal Advisers to pursue. The Legal Advisers decided, because of the complexity of the issue, to establish a drafting group to elaborate a final paper on the advisability of introducing such a mechanism. **ACC requested the Meeting of Legal Advisers to submit a final report on the subject for its consideration and approval at its fall 1999 session.**

* * *

48. ACC took note of the reports of: (a) CCAQ(FB) on its eighty-ninth session (Rome, 15–19 February 1999); (b) CCPOQ on its fourteenth session (Geneva, 10–12 March 1999); (c) IACSD on its thirteenth session (New York, 8–9 March 1999); and (d) IACWGE on its fourth session (New York, 23–26 February 1999).

49. ACC was further informed about developments and the views of its Organizational Committee on the following:

- (a) Substantive session of 1999 of the Economic and Social Council;
- (b) International Year for the Culture of Peace;
- (c) Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries;
- (d) Five-year review of the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development;
- (e) Five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development;

(f) Meetings between the regional commissions and the relevant entities of the United Nations system, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General;

(g) Non-Governmental Liaison Service.

III. Other matters

A. The Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on HIV/AIDS

50. The Executive Director of the Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) briefed ACC members on the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. He noted that it has become a major development crisis, with globally six million new infections a year — or 16,000 a day — and 35 million persons living with HIV and AIDS. In 1998, there were 2.5 million AIDS-related deaths, even more than from malaria. In fact, evidence increasingly shows that in the more seriously affected countries, AIDS is resulting in decreased life expectancy and increased child mortality. Furthermore, there is lost productivity, and the effects on the economy and development are starting to be more and more visible since most of those affected are in the productive part of their lives.

51. Africa is presently the most affected region. In four African countries, more than 25 per cent of the adult population is HIV-positive. Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 9 out of 10 new infections in 1998. In Asia, over the past three years there has been a doubling of infection in many countries, and if not controlled, proportions such as those in Africa are likely to develop. However, there were signs of hope: political awareness and commitment have dramatically increased from India to South Africa. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, while being a major health concern, affects all sectors of the economy and society — and thus is of major relevance to all organizations represented in ACC. The link to poverty was described, noting especially the impact on the health sector. The United Nations system is uniquely placed to make a difference through its political as well as development work.

52. UNAIDS, together with its co-sponsors, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), UNESCO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, has decided to intensify its action in Africa, where there is a major development crisis. This is being done in partnership with African Governments, regional bodies, bilateral development agencies, multilateral organizations, the corporate sector (with commitments from large pharmaceutical corporations, the entertainment industry and the Global

Business Council on AIDS) and with NGOs. The partnership will seek to develop joint multisectoral action plans prepared with major national and international stakeholders in participating countries and mobilize resources to fund them. Work is starting through country-based groups on HIV/AIDS.

53. **The Director-General of WHO**, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations of UNAIDS, reported on the meeting of the Committee, held on 8 April 1999, noting the advances made in preparing a joint budget and work plan and discussing the Africa Partnership. She **highlighted the issue of United Nations staff and dependants living with HIV/AIDS**, especially in country offices, where there was considerable inequity in available care. She indicated that stepped up efforts would be undertaken by the UNAIDS secretariat and WHO to continue the analysis of the issues involved, together with other concerned agencies. **She proposed that the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel Questions) consider putting the issue on its agenda and reporting to ACC on any policy-level considerations and joint actions needed.**

54. **On the recommendation of the Secretary-General, ACC concurred with the above suggestion.** The Secretary-General added that he was personally committed to the issue of HIV/AIDS, and said that whenever possible he had spoken on the issue, in terms of not only the effects on individuals but also the larger development and societal impacts. He invited all ACC members to do likewise.

B. Dates for the fall session of ACC

55. The Committee agreed to meet on Friday, 29, and Saturday, 30 October 1999 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

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56. Since the terms of the Director-General of WTO and the Administrator of UNDP would be coming to an end before the next meeting of ACC, the Secretary-General, on behalf of ACC, paid tribute to Renato Ruggiero and James Gustave Speth for their outstanding contribution to international cooperation and the work of ACC.

Annex I

ACC statement on Kosovo

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination, meeting at Geneva on 9 and 10 April 1999, is profoundly disturbed by the humanitarian and human rights tragedy unfolding in Kosovo and the surrounding region. We are deeply concerned by the massive displacement of people within Kosovo and deportations beyond its borders. We vigorously protest the brutal treatment of Kosovar civilians, for which there is a substantial and mounting body of evidence. We urge the Yugoslav authorities to respect the safety and integrity of ethnic Albanians remaining in Kosovo and to provide information on their situation.

2. ACC expresses appreciation to the countries of the region for offering asylum to those fleeing in extremely difficult circumstances. We sympathize with the difficulties this is causing, and urge unqualified respect for all international norms and standards applicable to refugees. The overriding goal should be the prompt and voluntary return of all refugees and displaced persons to their homes in conditions of safety and dignity.

3. The United Nations system, with UNHCR as lead humanitarian agency, has been deeply involved in international efforts to alleviate the human suffering, including through visits to the region by members of ACC in order to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation and ensure urgent action on the ground. The magnitude of the humanitarian challenge requires the commitment of the entire international community. We are heartened by the support that the United Nations humanitarian agencies have received and trust that support will continue until a lasting solution is found. Members of ACC pledge their commitment to work in a fully coordinated manner to address all aspects of this crisis, in the short and long terms.

4. ACC welcomed the statement on Kosovo issued by the Secretary-General on 24 March and 9 April 1999 and appeals to all concerned to heed his call.

Annex II

ACC statement on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192

1. ACC notes the progress made in strengthening the role of the United Nations system in providing support to national efforts of recipient countries through more effective development cooperation, greater efficiency and impact. This progress, enhanced by the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform initiatives and the reforms undertaken by other organizations of the United Nations system, is noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/192 on the triennial comprehensive policy review and the related report of the Secretary-General which was fully endorsed in that resolution.

2. ACC will continue to take the necessary steps to provide all recipient countries effective development support through full coordination at the global, regional and country levels. ACC will ensure that this support achieves optimal results at the country level, particularly in the eradication of poverty. The system will continue its support to national efforts in the implementation of globally agreed goals and targets, in accordance with national plans and priorities.

3. ACC will implement the relevant provisions of resolution 53/192 in a fully coordinated manner as outlined in the management process prepared in accordance with paragraph 60 of the resolution, and which will be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999. ACC notes the request made by the General Assembly to relevant governing bodies of the United Nations system to take appropriate action for the full implementation of the resolution in a complementary and coherent fashion. The outcome of these bodies will be taken fully into account in the implementation of the resolution over the next three years.

4. In order to give full effect to the relevant provisions of the resolution dealing with the resident coordinator system, ACC's Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), and its Working Group on the resident coordinator system will prepare relevant guidance and guidelines on the strengthening of country-level cooperation through the resident coordinator system. Appropriate supportive steps, including the simplification and harmonization of programming processes and procedures wherever necessary, will be taken by the relevant members of ACC. Particular attention will be paid to the full and effective participation of the organizations of the United Nations system in the preparation of common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Cooperation among all relevant partners of the United Nations

development system, including the Bretton Woods institutions will be ensured according to their respective mandates. The guidelines for the common country assessments and UNDAF explicitly provide for effective cooperation to this end. ACC welcomes the progress achieved so far on strengthening the resident coordinator system and on increasing ownership of it by the system as a whole.

5. ACC notes with concern the continuing decline in core resources for development cooperation and looks forward to the successful conclusion of the negotiations on funding strategies foreseen in paragraph 16 of resolution 53/192. It notes with pleasure the provisions of paragraph 11, which welcomes the steps taken by the system in achieving overall improvement in the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the United Nations system in delivering development assistance.

6. ACC will undertake the required steps to give full effect to the relevant provisions of the resolution dealing with the coordinated follow-up to global conferences, gender in development, technical cooperation among developing countries, capacity-building, cooperation with civil society, supporting countries involved in various stages of relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, regional dimensions of development, national execution and monitoring and evaluation.

Annex III

ACC statement on the impact of climate change and depletion of renewable resources affecting small island developing States

1. ACC notes with concern the growing vulnerability of the populations of small island developing States and their property, particularly from natural and other environmental disasters, impacts of climate change, and depletion of renewable resources. During the past decade, there has been an increasing awareness that these risks are proportionately higher and more difficult to address in small island States than in continental States. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by overexploitation of living marine resources, and increasing activities related to urbanization and agriculture. Moreover, such disasters usually lead to the interruption of national development in small island States. In some cases, a single tropical cyclone, tsunami, earthquake or volcanic eruption can cause large losses to gross national product and set back the economy several years. Overfishing of coastal resources, both in lagoons and in their exclusive economic zone affects the sustainability of the livelihood of island communities and their income opportunities, while also diminishing their access to high quality protein.

2. Under these conditions, the achievement of sustainable development in small island States, as proposed in Agenda 21, requires a strengthened commitment for continued support from the international community and concerted action by the United Nations system to assist with the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and other dedicated United Nations programmes that have been designed to specifically address pressing problems of these States.

3. In preparation for the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and subsequently, the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Programme of Action, ACC:

(a) Reaffirms its commitment to a preventive approach and to continue providing sustained support to small island States in dealing with problems related to important issues, such as natural and environmental disasters, the impacts of climate change and sea level rise, the management of wastes, integrated coastal zone management, responsible fisheries management and development, the assessment and management of freshwater resources, land degradation, land development, energy availability, the management of tourism development, population growth and biodiversity;

(b) Invites Member States of the United Nations to:

(i) Continue to support a global system for the provision of information, early warning, mitigation and adaptation to natural hazards, such as tropical cyclones and droughts, climate variation, forest fires, pests and diseases, that particularly affect small island developing States;

(ii) Participate in the development and implementation of global systems for observing the atmosphere, oceans and terrestrial ecosystems, especially in remote areas and on islands where observational data are extremely sparse, in order to better understand and assess the variability and potential change in the Earth's climate, especially as it might relate to sea level rise, and in particular provide continued support to efforts to adapt to global climate change;

(iii) Promote human and institutional capacity-building to assist with the development of expertise on environmental and natural resource management, enhance research capability, facilitate technology transfer and the use of new information and communication technology, and promote integrated policy and planning in order to ensure the integration of disaster risk management in sustainable development;

(iv) Provide support for comprehensive analysis of the risk for small island developing States and for the development of strategies to effectively transfer and manage financial aid in order to preclude the diversion of national resources that inevitably occurs when disaster hits, leading to the failure to fulfil long-term development goals;

(v) Assist in the protection of fragile environmental assets, such as coral reefs, mangrove forests, critical marine habitats and other natural resources, including various fauna and flora that are unique to small island developing States;

(vi) Assist small island developing States in their efforts to implement the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and other binding international instruments which provide the basis for the sustainable development of both inshore and offshore fisheries for these States;

(vii) Assist small island developing States, through appropriate international, bilateral and multilateral

programmes and projects, in addressing major environmental, demographic and socio-economic issues.
